(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. Facilities of booking and delivery of Telegrams, STD Calls, Trunk Calls and fax services are available at the telegraph office Bellary between 0700-2200 Hours. The present Traffic load does not justify extension of the working hours of Telegraph office. However for the purpose of STD calls, franchised private operators are available in the city.

Teesta Barrage Project

775. KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether due to delayed decision regarding finalisation of construction process of the work for formation of Teesta Jaldhaka Main Canal, the project costs has gone up;

(b) the latest position of Teesta Barrage Project in West Bengal; and

(c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken for early completion of the project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) The project was delayed on account of problems concerning land acquisition.

(b) Presently sub-stage-I of Stage-I of Teesta Barrage (Phase-I) is under execution. The present stage of constructions of different components of the project as on March, 1997 is as below :

Three Barrages namely Teesta, Mahananda and Dauk Nagar Barrages, Teesta Mahananda link canal and Mahananda main canal have been completed. The progress of other three main canals and distribution system is as given below :

1.	Dauk Nagar main canal	—	66%
2.	Nagar Tangon main canal	—	0%
3.	Teesta Jal Dhaka main canal	—	55%
4.	Distribution system	—	25%

(c) The Planning Commission approved Additional Central Assistance of Rs. 150 crores for the project during VIII Five Year Plan. Further, a Central Loan Assistance of Rs. 5.0 crore under Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme was released to the project during 1996-97 and an instalment of Rs. 15 crores has been released this year.

However irrigation is a State subject. The completion of the project will depend upon the priority attached to it by the State Government.

[Translation]

Expenditure on Defence Projects

776. SHRI D.P. YADAV: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the total amount spent on various defence projects during the year 1997 till date; and

(b) the details of defence projects successfully launched during 1997?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI MULAYAM SINGH YADAV): (a) The defence budget for the financial year 1997-98, including funds for new and ongoing defence projects is Rs.32000 crores.

(b) Disclosing specific details of defence projects will not be in the interest of national security.

[Engish]

Talwar Committee

777. SHRI JAGDAMBI PRASAD YADAV:

SHRI RASA SINGH RAWAT:

SHIR SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whehter the department treats Extra Departmental Agents as Government Staff;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of E.D. employees in the country and the details of their pay structure and working conditions;

(d) whether the Government have constituted Justice Talwar Committee for examining the service conditions, emoluments and facilities available to E.D. employees/ agents, has submitted its report;

(e) if so, the main recommendations made by the Committee;

(f) the action taken by the Government thereon;

(g) whether Fifth Pay Commission has made any recommendations in this regard; and

(h) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) As on 31.3.1997, the number of ED Agents was 3,08,307. Details of pay structure and working conditions are given in the Statement laid on the Table of the House.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) A summary of the Committee's recommendations is also laid on the Table of the House.

(f) Some of the recommendations have been implemented and others are under the active consideration of the Government.